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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine whether formal instruction in multicultural education would produce changes in preservice teachers' beliefs about basic concepts related to the topic. The sample consisted of 31 preservice teachers enrolled in 2 sections of a practicum course in early childhood education. Three professors planned and delivered five hours of formal instruction, including lectures and an oral dialog between two professors of different racial backgrounds. Preservice teachers (N=31) received the instruction in three sessions. Prior to the first lecture session and six weeks after the last one, the education majors responded to the Survey of Multicultural Education Concepts (SMEC). The SMEC is designed to assess beliefs and attitudes about multicultural education with items representing: racism, sexism, stereotyping, linguistic views, special holidays, and educational practices. Results of the study suggest that carefully planned and implemented formal instruction may be used to change preservice teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity. It is recommended that formal instruction include lectures by professors of differing races and genders. A copy of the SMEC along with pre- and post-means responses are appended. (Contains 14 references.) (LL)

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Effects of Formal Instruction on Preservice Teachers' Beliefs about Multicultural Education

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Abstract

A pretest-posttest design was used to determine whether formal instruction on the topic of multicultural education would produce changes in preservice teachers' beliefs about basic concepts related to the topic. Three professors planned and delivered five hours of formal instruction, which included lectures and an oral dialog between two professors of different racial backgrounds; 31 preservice teachers received the instruction in three sessions, each being approximately one-and-a-half hours in length. Prior to the first lecture session and six weeks after the last lecture session, the preservice teachers responded to the Survey of Multicultural Education Concepts, an instrument consisting of 18 items with a Likert-type response scale.

The results of correlated t-tests indicated significant differences between pre and post scores on the total survey (t = 4.48, $p<.000$), and on six item means (item 3, t = 2.30, $p<.03$; item 6, t = 4.00, $p<.001$; item 12, t = 3.64, $p<.001$; item 13, t = 2.72, $p<.01$; item 17, t = 2.32, $p<.03$; item 18, t = 2.07, $p<.05$). The six items addressed beliefs about the use of multicultural curricula, the celebration of "Black History Month," and gender issues.

Effects of Formal Instruction on Preservice Teachers' Beliefs about Multicultural Education

Introduction

The rapid rate at which cultural diversity is increasing in the United States is bringing new challenges to teachers at all levels (Baruth & Manning, 1992; Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1992; Gollnick & Chinn, 1990). Differing values, customs, and traditions must be understood and respected by teachers if they are to respond appropriately to all learners. Racial, religious, socioeconomic, physical, linguistic, and individual differences require that teachers develop attitudes, knowledge, and skills that will facilitate positive self-concepts, academic achievement, and social development among diverse students.

Teacher training programs must prepare preservice teachers to work successfully in a multicultural environment. National education organizations have developed position statements and accreditation standards in the area of multicultural education (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1989; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 1982; Southern Association for Children Under Six, 1988). Some teacher education faculty and administrators have begun the process of examining the extent to which preservice teachers are acquiring multicultural concepts (Grottkau and Nickolai-Mays, 1989; Haberman and Post, 1990; Narang, 1984; Rashid, 1990); in general, the findings have been that preservice teachers do not feel that

they are prepared to teach in culturally-diverse classrooms. In 1985, Mitchell conducted a national survey of state departments of education to determine the extent to which states are assuming responsibility for including multicultural education in elementary, secondary, and higher education programs. Based on the surveys returned from 48 states, Mitchell (1985) concluded that while states recognize the importance of multicultural education, it is receiving little attention at the state level.

Perhaps teacher education programs, through the development of multicultural education programs at the preservice level, can serve as a catalyst for the development of school programs in which all learners achieve and respect each other. Multicultural education programs for preservice teachers must include the development of positive attitudes about diversity. According to De Costa (1984), helping preservice teachers recognize that all learners are not Anglo and middle class represents a significant step toward providing appropriate educational experiences for the students they will teach. The question becomes: How can teacher educators bring about the kinds of attitudinal changes that may be needed among preservice teachers in order for them to grow in their knowledge about diversity and to develop instructional skills that will be effective with diverse learners? The extent to which formal instruction in multicultural education is effective with preservice teachers is not known.

This study examined the effects of formal instruction about

multicultural education on preservice teachers' beliefs. The research question addressed by the study was: Will the beliefs of preservice teachers about basic concepts related to multicultural education change as a result of formal instruction? Also, the investigators were interested in determining which areas (topics) in preservice teachers' belief systems are likely to change as a result of formal instruction.

Methodology

Sample

The sample consisted of 31 preservice teachers, all of whom were white females. The preservice teachers were enrolled in two sections of a practicum course in early childhood education which were taught by the same professor. The preservice teachers were majoring in elementary education and all of them had completed at least six methods courses in elementary education.

Instrument

The Survey of Multicultural Education Concepts (SMEC) was used as a pre- and post-measure. The SMEC, which was constructed by the researchers, consists of 18 items. The SMEC is designed to assess beliefs and attitudes about multicultural education. Items represent the following areas: racism, sexism, stereotyping, linguistic views, special holidays, and educational practices.

A Likert scale is used for responding to the SMEC. Responses range from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree).

The maximum score obtainable on the SMEC is 72. Item 14 is reversed scored. A high total score on the SMEC is interpreted as indicating that the respondent has positive beliefs and attitudes about multicultural education concepts. However, mean item responses will be of value when attempting to identify the specific areas in which a group of respondents could benefit from instructional activities designed to expand multicultural understandings.

The validity and reliability of the SMEC have not been investigated. A copy of the SMEC is appended.

Instruction

Preservice teachers received instruction in basic concepts related to multicultural education during three consecutive class sessions, each lasting approximately one and a half hours. Instruction included two lecture sessions and the presentation of an oral dialog between the professor of the course and one his colleagues. The professor of the course, a black male, and two white female colleagues planned and delivered the instructional sessions.

The prior experiences of the professor and his two colleagues with cultural and linguistic diversity were extensive; the professor had conducted many workshops focusing on ideas for building the self-esteem of minority students and had given keynote addresses at conferences related to different aspects of multicultural education. One of his colleagues had taught

classes of Native American students, classes of black American students, and integrated classes of black and white American students, and her work experiences included curriculum development and adaptations for second-language learners. The other colleague had taught classes of black American students as well as integrated classes of black and white American students.

The first instructional session was taught by the professor of the course. This lecture session included the topics: anti-bias, gender bias, ageism, ethnic customs, and appropriate multicultural classroom practices; ideas from A Child Goes Forth (Taylor, 1991) were incorporated into the lecture. Also, definitions of terminology associated with multicultural concepts were provided.

The second instructional session included lectures by the professor of the course and one of the two colleagues, with each giving about a 30-minute lecture followed by discussion. The lectures were based on concepts contained in The Anti-bias Curriculum (Derman-Sparks, 1989) and included the following topics: understanding cultural differences and similarities among racial groups, teaching about disabilities, the development of gender identity, and how to analyze children's books for bias.

The third instructional session was an oral dialog between the professor and the second colleague. The preservice teachers observed and listened to the dialog and were invited to participate in the dialog if they wished to do so. During the

oral dialog, the professor and his colleague asked each other's opinions and beliefs about a variety of multicultural education topics and issues. They reacted to each other's comments as well as to comments made by the preservice teachers. After the first fifteen minutes of the oral dialog, the preservice teachers became very involved in the dialog and were reluctant to leave when the class session ended. Among the topics discussed during the dialog were: ways the family and educational systems may be contributing to the development of sexism, the social and emotional needs of the physically disabled, sources of racism, and respect for religious differences. During the oral dialog, the professor and his colleague expressed freely their views and opinions, occasionally differing in their perspectives but showing respect for each other's perspectives.

Procedures

The professor of the course and two of his colleagues planned together the three instructional sessions that would be implemented to examine the effects of formal instruction on preservice teachers' beliefs about multicultural education. It was decided that lectures followed by discussions and the presentation of an oral dialog between the professor and one of his colleagues would be appropriate instructional procedures.

The week prior to beginning the instructional sessions, the preservice teachers in the professor's two classes responded to the SMEC as a pre-measure. During the following three,

consecutive class sessions the professor and his colleagues presented instruction which emphasized selected concepts associated with multicultural education. Since there were two sections of the course, each instructional session was presented twice on the same day.

In order to receive feedback about the effectiveness of the instructional sessions addressing multicultural education, the professor of the course asked students (at the next class meeting) to write their thoughts about the effectiveness of the sessions, without including their names on their papers. The professor collected their written comments.

Six weeks later, the SMEC was administered as a post-measure.

Results

Correlated *t*-tests were used to analyze the data from the pre- and post-measures. The .05 level of significance was used for the analyses. Because of missing data, the number of cases varied during analyses.

Significant differences were indicated between pre- and post-scores on the total survey ($t[18] = 4.48$, $p<.001$) and on six item means: item 3 ($t[23] = 2.30$, $p<.03$); item 6 ($t[22] = 4.00$, $p<.001$); item 12 ($t[23] = 3.64$, $p<.001$); item 13 ($t[23] = 2.72$, $p<.01$); item 17 ($t[23] = 2.32$, $p<.03$); and, item 18 ($t[23] = 2.07$, $p<.05$). No significant differences were indicated between pre- and post-scores for items 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14,

15, and 16. Pre- and post-item means are shown in Table 1.

Discussion

The most important finding was that formal instruction may be used to change some of the beliefs of preservice teachers in areas related to multicultural education. The fact that preservice teachers' beliefs changed after participating in only three instructional sessions is especially encouraging. The researchers believe that the instructional procedures used (i.e., team-teaching by professors of different genders and races and the oral dialog presentation) were very important factors in bringing about changes in the preservice teachers' beliefs, prompting the question: Would changes in beliefs have occurred if the three instructional sessions had been presented by a single professor using only a lecture approach to cover the same content? Additional research is needed to answer this question. However, the written comments received from the preservice teachers repeatedly mentioned that having different professors give their perspectives about various topics was both thought provoking and educational and that the oral dialog approach was very effective. Portions of three of the written comments follow:

(1) First of all I would like to say, I think it is wonderful to see that two people with different opinions can sit down and talk. As it was brought out in class, most of the time we think of racism as [being] just between black and white, or

race against race; but there can also be racism or prejudice within a culture. It was real interesting, the point about socioeconomic prejudice. I have never thought of prejudice in that way....

(2) On Thursday, April 9, Dr. Moore and Dr. Reeves carried on a conversation about multiculturalism. It was neat to see it done in this manner. There were some aspects of prejudice that they didn't agree on, but neither one got defensive. I admire this because this is how it should be discussed. No one says that we have to agree, but we need to be willing to listen to what others think with an open mind because we might learn something....I enjoyed listening to the conversation. More people need to do this in this manner and maybe we could [begin to] see things from another perspective....I think I have concluded that prejudice is how you feel and think about a different culture and [that] discrimination is when you act upon those feelings.

(3) ...As a result of the class discussions on multicultural education, I better understand the ultimate importance of its role in a curriculum - meet the needs of all children!

Future research studies should be designed to compare the effectiveness of different approaches (e.g., lecture only, panel discussions among people from different racial groups, team-teaching, oral dialogs between people from different cultures, videotapes, etc.) when using formal instruction to teach concepts

associated with multicultural education.

Of the six items on which the pre- and post-means differed significantly, four of the items (numbers 3, 6, 12, and 13) deal with beliefs about specific curricular and teaching practices; item 17 deals with a prejudgment about effective teachers; and, item 18 deals with one's feelings about discussing sexism. It was encouraging to find that the instructional sessions helped preservice teachers (a) see the importance of offering multicultural curricula to white children, (b) understand that songs about an ethnic group should not be sung in classrooms, (c) realize that some teacher behaviors may encourage the development of sexism, and (d) see that singling out any ethnic group for special recognition may create divisiveness, rather than cohesion, among groups of people.

It was interesting to find that the pre- and post-means for two items (numbers 4 and 9) related to beliefs about African Americans did not change at all. It appears that the preservice teachers were undecided (M = 2.50) about whether there are more stereotypes about African Americans than about any other ethnic group (item 4) and that the instructional sessions did not develop the awareness that the number of stereotypes held about a specific ethnic group varies from individual to individual, from one group of people to another group, from one regional area to another regional area, etc. Since none of the instructional sessions included a discussion about this particular point, the

preservice teachers were unable to infer from the discussions presented that stereotyping is affected by many factors. On item 9, preservice teachers pre-instructional responses indicated that they "disageed" with the statement that African American students learn more when taught by an African American, and their post-instructional responses to this item indicated the same belief. It is not clear why they didn't disagree more strongly with this statement as a result of the instructional sessions. Additional research is needed to to understand why preservice teachers' beliefs on these items remained the same.

It was disappointing to find that the instructional sessions did not enable the preservice teachers to grasp the concept that people throughout the world <u>are more alike</u> than they are different (item 14). They indicated disagreement with this item in their pre-responses (M = 3.12) and post-responses (M = 3.17). It may be that the wording on this item is ambiguous; perhaps, the word "people" should be replaced with "human beings," or there may not have been enough emphasis placed on the fact that while there are some differences among groups of people, there are also many ways in which people are alike.

In summary, the results of this study indicate that carefully planned and implemented formal instruction may be used to change preservice teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity. It is recommended that formal instruction include lectures by professors of differing races and genders, who team in their

planning and delivery of instruction, and the use of the oral dialog as an instructional procedure. However, future studies should be designed to compare the effects of different instructional approaches. Also, it would be useful to include interviews of preservice teachers as one of several post-measures, so that insights may be gained about why beliefs may change in some areas but not in other areas. More research is needed to determine the most effective ways for developing preservice teachers with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to create and maintain multicultural classroom environments.

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SURVEY OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION CONCEPTS

DIRECTIONS: For each item put an "X" on the line under the response which represents your opinion.

SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree

		SD	D	A	SA
1)	Talking about racism makes me uncomfortable.				
2)	Knowing a person's "skin color" is knowing that person's culture.				
3)	White children do not need multicultural curricula.				
4)	There are more stereotypes about African Americans than about any other ethnic group.				
5)	American Indians are not competitive.				
6)	Singing "Ten Little Indians" is an appropriate classroom practice.				
7)	The best person to write about or discuss African American culture is an African American.				
8)	Most books used in classrooms are sexist.				
9)	African American students learn more when taught by an African American.				
10)	African American teachers are more effective than White American teachers in teaching the African American student.				
11)	Most ethnic groups have the same value.				
12)	It is acceptable for teachers to place "masculine symbols on boys' lockers and "feminine" symbols on girls" lockers.				
13)	Celebrating "Black History Month" is an appropriate practice.				

14) People throughout the world are more alike than they are different. ___ ___ ___ ___

15) Most foreign languages sound alike. ___ ___ ___ ___

16) Celebrating "Women's History Month" is an appropriate practice. ___ ___ ___ ___

17) Teachers who are parents are more effective than teachers without children. ___ ___ ___ ___

18) Talking about "sexism" makes me uncomfortable. ___ ___ ___ ___

Table 1

Pre- and Post-Means on the SMEC

Item No.	N	Pre-mean	Post-mean	t	p
1	24	3.25	3.33	.46	.647
2	24	3.37	3.50	.62	.543
3	24	3.66	3.92	2.30	.031*
4	24	2.50	2.50	.00	1.000
5	21	3.00	3.10	.62	.540
6	23	2.21	3.17	4.00	.001*
7	24	2.58	2.33	1.24	.228
8	22	2.54	2.41	.83	.418
9	24	3.04	3.04	.00	1.000
10	24	2.91	3.13	1.42	.170
11	24	2.91	3.04	.55	.588
12	24	2.62	3.33	3.64	.001*
13	24	2.20	2.75	2.72	.012*
14	24	3.12	3.17	.24	.814
15	24	3.20	3.29	.62	.539
16	24	2.25	2.63	1.89	.071
17	24	2.83	3.25	2.32	.030*
18	24	3.29	3.58	2.07	.050*
All	19	50.84	55.11	4.48	.001*

*$p < .05$